5 May 2021

Dear [Member of Parliament name],

I am writing to you as a constituent of the [insert electorate e.g. Fremantle] electorate and as a [parent of a gifted child, teacher of gifted students, researcher interested in gifted education etc].

All education sector policy and guideline documents in Western Australia subscribe to Gagne’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT 2.0), which identifies 10% of the student population as gifted. There are approximately 300,000 students enrolled in schools in Western Australia. Therefore, given this figure, there are at least 30,000 gifted students, both in selective and non-selective schools. **However,** **despite this being a significant amount of the student population, there is no mandatory requirement for teacher professional learning in gifted and talented education.** Every student, regardless of whether or not they are in a GAT program, deserves well-trained teachers who have the skills and training to properly identify gifted children in the classroom so appropriate provisions can be made to their academic and social-emotional development. I have attached some additional background information about the current state of gifted education in Western Australia.

The State Government can easily remedy this. I urge you to implement mandatory professional learning in gifted education for teachers and raise this with your relevant colleagues to enact change. Specifically, I ask you to commit to implementing the following actions:

1. **Graduate teachers to complete at least 10 hours of evidence-based professional learning in gifted education, within the first 3 years of their teaching career**
2. **Fully registered teachers to complete 10 hours of evidence-based professional learning in gifted education, prior to re-registration**

This issue matters to me because [add your personal story here e.g. tell the story of your child or your teaching experience. Give specific details – school sector, year level. Keep it to 200-500 words].

I look forward to your reply and would welcome an opportunity to talk further about this either on [your contact phone number or email] or in person at your offices.

Yours faithfully,

[Your full name]

[Your residential address – i.e. not a PO Box]

[Your phone number and/or email]

**Background information**

**Current state of gifted education in Australia**

(summary provided by Gifted WA –2021)

Did you know that 20% of high school dropouts have tested in the gifted range and that gifted individuals represent up to 20% of the prison population? (Martin & Loomis, 2013). This highlights the need for a successful school experience for all students, and this starts with well-trained teachers.

The Gonski 2.0 Report, published in May 2018, identified that there are over 4 million students enrolled in Australian schools. However, despite there being over 400,000 gifted students in our nations' schools (as per Gagne’s DMGT 2.0), there is no national strategic plan for gifted students. There is a fundamental lack of resourcing for their teachers and very little acknowledgement and implementation of evidence-led research in the area of gifted education.

Our PISA results keep dropping. The proportion of top performing students (scoring at level 5 or 6) remains stable in reading (between 2009 and 2018), but decreased in mathematics (between 2012 and 2018) and in science (between 2006 and 2018) ([OECD Country Note](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_AUS.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0kmAxFMOOyMJo9Dz27XCqWhg1zZaCoLNl7gPMtFv7sN0iE8u1Dxl06lTs), p. 4). These results indicate why it is necessary for teachers to have mandatory training in gifted education to adequately respond to the needs of our brightest minds.

We acknowledge the Government’s commitment to increasing the number of places available to gifted students in GAT programs. However, these programs only cater for a small proportion of this population: there are considerably fewer places than there are gifted students. Similarly, access to these programs is limited for students whose family circumstances necessitate they enrol in their local school, who may not sit GAT testing, or who may not succeed in securing a place due to socio-economic disadvantage or twice-exceptionality. In addition to this, while the PEAC program offers opportunities for some gifted students from Year 5, prior to this there are incredibly few opportunities for gifted students to attend any form of GAT program. Early identification and intervention is essential, particularly for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. According to the Grattan Institute, the NAPLAN scores of high achieving students from low socio-economic backgrounds demonstrate a significant decline in achievement levels between years 3 and 9 in comparison to their more privileged high-achieving peers. Tellingly, gifted students from low socio-economic backgrounds are profoundly underrepresented in our GAT programs. According to the My Schools website, in 2019, Perth Modern students were the second most advantaged in the country. None of their students were in the bottom quartile of the ICSEA bracket and almost 90% were in the top quartile. Similarly, 0% were from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds.

Many researchers including Barnett (2015) and Reis & Renzulli (2002), believe that the lack of teacher training in gifted education could be the reason why many grouping programs don’t meet their intended goals. Gifted WA is receiving an increasing number of enquiries from parents and teachers who want information, training and support in gifted education. Hundreds of attendees have accessed Gifted WA professional learning events in the last 12 months. This is another indication of the urgency of action needed by the Government. **I implore you to be part of this change.**

**Evidence-based Professional Learning**

Evidence-based professional learning is training offered by a professional with qualifications specifically in the area of gifted education and/or twice-exceptionality. It is based on peer-reviewed research and information provided has been evaluated and proven to improve student outcomes over time. There are already high quality professional learning opportunities available to teachers in Australia, including but not limited to:

* GERRIC’s Mini Certificate of Gifted Education (Mini-COGE)

<https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/school-education/events/mini-coge-course>

* Growing Up Greatness – courses, training, seminars

<https://www.growingupgreatness.com/events>

* Gifted WA events

<https://giftedwa.org.au/events>

* Many WA universities offer community outreach programs for schools